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**Matt Stickland NDP**  
June 12 · 🌐

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Hello again. Let's talk veterans.

Because of when I joined, and when the medical release process started for me, it was looking like I was going to be released at nine and a half years of service. For me, that meant I would be a couple months shy of getting a medical pension and access to health insurance.

Since my release process started a couple of years ago, I've had six or seven case managers. Every time I've tried to access a program, I've called my case manager for help and been informed they are no longer my case manager. "But," I've been told "the online system is available 24/7! You can use that at any time! Also, it's easy!"

Now I'm good with computers, but the myVAC site is a pain even for me. I often can't log in, this morning, for example, I needed to ask a question, and I'm at 10 failed login attempts. When I can log in the site is confusing. Some forms can be completed on the site; some need to be downloaded; others, once downloaded can't be altered and need to be printed and scanned. Some forms that can be filled out electronically need to be taken to your family doctor – if you have one.

Veterans Affairs Canada could have amazing programs for veterans, but if vets can't access them, what's the point?

And as I'm trying to deal with the forms I need to fill out, and access services I need; I'm trying to plan for my life after the military. Right now VAC offers education benefits, but only if they'll be finished, with some sort of certification, within two years. This is great if veterans have a bachelors and want to get a masters, or if they want to learn a trade. However, it's useless for veterans who want to get a bachelor's degree.

Depending on the injuries someone received during their service, a trade might not be feasible. Most jobs now require a bachelor's degree.

My first goal is to build compassion into the veteran's affairs system. Right now, it's an unforgiving bureaucracy that is hard to navigate and just leaves a bad taste in your mouth – that needs to change.

My plan for Veterans

- 1) Ensure all military members who get injured due to service qualify for the public service healthcare plan regardless of time served.
- 2) Hire family doctors who will be accessible through the OSI network to veterans.
- 3) Change the education benefit to cover four years of schooling instead of two.
- 4) Find out why case manager turnover is so high at Veterans Affairs and prevent it from happening.
- 5) Make sure veterans can access the programs they qualify for.

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